

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: H.

Date: July 27, 2005

Topic: First Review of Proposal to Enact Special Provision in 8 VAC 20-131-340.B Related to the Use of Test Scores in Calculating Accreditation Ratings for the 2005-2006 School Year

Presenter: Ms. Anne D. Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications

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Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by

State or federal law or regulation

Board of Education regulation

Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting

Action requested at future meeting: _____

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action date _____ action _____

Background Information: The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* defines the basis for a school's accreditation rating.

8 VAC 20-131-280.A. states that:

“Schools will be accredited annually based on compliance with pre-accreditation eligibility requirements and achievement of the school accountability requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-300.C.”

8 VAC 20-131-280.C. states (in part) that:

“Each school shall be accredited based, primarily, on achievement of the criteria established in 8 VAC 20-131-30 as specified below:

1. All students enrolled in a grade or course in which a SOL test is administered shall take each applicable SOL test unless exempted from participating in all or part of the testing program...
2. In a manner prescribed by the Board, the evaluation of the performance of schools shall take into consideration:

- a. The percentage of eligible students who achieve a passing score on the prescribed SOL tests or additional tests used for verified units of credit as outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-110.B...
3. The awarding of an accreditation rating shall be based on the percentage of students passing SOL tests or approved additional tests described in 8 VAC 20-131-110.B. or a trailing three-year average that includes the current scores and the scores from the two most recent years, in each applicable academic year, or the current year's scores, whichever is higher.”

8 VAC 20-131-300.C.1.a states that:

“A school will be rated Fully Accredited when its eligible students meet the pass rate of 70% in each of the four core academic areas except, effective with ratings earned in the academic year 2003-04 and beyond, the pass rates required shall be 75% in third and fifth grade English and 50% in third grade science and history/social science. In schools housing grades kindergarten through five, the English and mathematics pass rates for accreditation purposes shall be calculated for these grades as single rates by combining the scores of all grades three and five SOL tests administered in English and by combining the scores of all grades three and five SOL tests administered in mathematics.”

8 VAC 20-131-340.B. states that:

“The Board may enact special provisions related to the administration and use of any SOL test or tests in a content area as applied to this chapter for any period during which the SOL content in that area is being revised and phased in.”

In 2001 the Board of Education made significant revisions to the 1995 History and Social Science Standards of Learning. School divisions were encouraged to phase-in the implementation of the revised History and Social Science Standards of Learning from 2001 to 2004 while the original tests were being fully aligned to the standards. The 2003-2004 school year represented the final year of the phase-in period for the revised history and social science content standards and the first year that all history and social science tests were fully aligned to the revised 2001 standards.

Summary of Major Elements: The 2000 General Assembly passed legislation requiring the development of three separate, topical tests measuring the Standards of Learning included in the cumulative history and social science test typically administered in either grade seven or eight. The three new upper elementary/middle school tests are optional tests that assess Standards of Learning in United States History I (to 1877), United States History II (1877 to the Present), and Civics and Economics. The development of additional upper elementary/middle tests in history and social science allows school divisions to test students in history and social science content immediately following instruction in the standards. School divisions organize their curricula to teach these topics in grades five through seven or in grades six through eight. The separate, topical tests in history and social sciences are offered in addition to the cumulative grade eight history and social science test. A Virginia Studies test is administered in grades four or five. Students in grade three take a cumulative history and social science test.

As part of the test development process, Harcourt Educational Measurement conducted field tests of items for the new history tests for United States History I (to 1877), United States History II (1877 to the Present), and

Civics and Economics during the spring of 2002-2003. During 2003-2004 many school divisions administered the new elementary/middle history and social science tests for the first time in addition to the fully aligned cumulative test for grade three, Virginia Studies, and cumulative test for grade eight.

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131-340.B.) permit the Board to modify the use of Standards of Learning test scores in accreditation calculations during a period in which the standards in that content area are being phased-in. Additionally 8 VAC 20-131-280.C.2.(a) gives the Board authority to prescribe the SOL tests used in evaluating the performance of schools.

In September 2004 the Board of Education enacted the special provision in Section 8 VAC 20-131-340.B and its authority given in 8 VAC 20-131-280.C.2.(a) to include the scores of the new, separate upper elementary/middle United States History I (to 1877), United States History II (1877 to the Present), and Civics and Economics topical tests in calculating accreditation ratings for 2004-2005 only if they helped the school. During the 2004-2005 school year school divisions continued to work with teachers on the implementation of the Standards of Learning for United States History I (to 1877), United States History II (1877 to the Present), and Civics and Economics. Based on feedback the department has received from division superintendents, principals, and teachers, the implementation of the standards for United States History I (to 1877) has proven to be particularly challenging.

To allow school divisions additional time to implement adjustments to the curriculum for United States History I (to 1877), the department recommends phasing in the inclusion of results from the new, separate upper elementary/middle United States History I (to 1877), United States History II (1877 to the Present), and Civics and Economics topical tests in accreditation ratings for 2005-2006. It is recommended that the scores from the United States History II (1877 to the Present), and Civics and Economics test be used in calculating accreditation ratings in 2005-2006 but that the scores for the United States History I (to 1877) be included only if they help the school. All other history and social science Standards of Learning tests administered in a school will be included in the accreditation calculation. This methodology would apply in calculating the accreditation rating using the current year's data and the three-year trailing average.

All Standards of Learning test results will be reported on the School Performance Report Card.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and adopt the proposal to enact the special provision in Section 8 VAC 20-131-340.B and its authority given in 8 VAC 20-131-280.C.2.(a) and include the scores of United States History I (to 1877), in calculating accreditation ratings for 2005-2006 only if they help the school.

Impact on Resources: The impact on resources of the Department of Education will be in the time required to re-program and test the formula for calculating the accreditation ratings of the affected schools.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: If approved, the Department of Education will notify school divisions and will calculate accreditation ratings accordingly.